



Instructions for Influenza Specimen Collection

Arkansas Public Health Laboratory

Specimen collection

- Collect specimen within 3 days of onset of symptoms.
- Only use swabs and transport medium supplied with kit. DO NOT use saline.
- DO NOT use calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden sticks.
- DO NOT collect in transport systems used for bacteriological collections (Amies media).

Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab

- Insert flexible wire shaft swab through the nares parallel to the palate (not upwards) until resistance is encountered or the distance is equivalent to that from the ear to the nostril of the patient indicating contact with the nasopharynx.
- Gently rub and roll the swab. Leave in place for several seconds to absorb secretions before removing.
- Place entire swab and shaft in tube containing viral transport medium.

Oropharyngeal (OP) swab (Throat swab)

- Insert swab into the posterior pharynx and tonsillar areas.
- Rub swab over both tonsillar pillars and posterior oropharynx; avoid touching the tongue, teeth and gums.
- Place swab in tube containing viral transport medium and break shaft at score.

Nasal swab

- Place swab into nostril and gently roll. Leave in place several seconds before removing.
- Place swab in tube containing viral transport medium and break shaft at score.

Combination Oropharyngeal and Nasal swabs

- Collect specimens as described above and place both swabs in one tube containing viral transport medium.

Nasal Aspirate (commonly collected in children <5 years old)

- Have the patient sit with head tilted slightly backward.
- Instill 1mL of nonbacteriostatic saline (pH 7.0) into one nostril.
- Flush a plastic catheter or tubing with 2-3mL of saline.
- Insert the tubing into the nostril parallel to the palate (not upwards).
- Aspirate nasopharyngeal secretions and place in tube containing viral transport medium.

Submission Form and Labeling

- Complete ADH Influenza Lab Specimen Submission Form (PHL 08-69).
- Notate any flu-like symptoms, rapid test results, recent travel and vaccination history.
- Include all submitter information and a Fax number to send results.
- Label transport tube with patient name, date of birth, and date of collection.

Packaging

- Place specimen and absorbent material in ziplock portion of biohazard bag.
- Place Submission Form (PHL 08-69) in back pocket of biohazard bag.
- Pack biohazard bag in appropriate specimen shipping container with a cold pack to maintain cool temperature during shipment.

Handling and Transportation of Specimen

- Transport to the Public Health Laboratory as soon as possible.
- Refrigerate specimens before and during transport. DO NOT freeze.
- Specimens **must** be received by the PHL within 72 hours from the time of collection.

Shipping

- Specimen shipment may be arranged through your nearest local health department at no cost.
- Alternatively, specimens may be delivered to the Public Health Laboratory at:

Arkansas Public Health Laboratory
201 South Monroe
Little Rock, AR 72205
Ph. (501)661-2000

Note to Couriers

Deliveries to the Arkansas Public Health Laboratory should be made at the rear entrance located on the East side of the building on Palm St. Turn at the fourth driveway on the right from the corner of W. Markham and Palm St.